United Nations E/CN.6/2008/NGO/23

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
18 December 2007

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-second session
25 February-7 March 2008
Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Womankind Worldwide, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2008/1.

07-65228 (E) 160108

Statement

WOMANKIND Worldwide[1] (WK) is an international women's human rights and development organisation working in partnership with 32 partners in 14 countries around the world to tackle gender inequality and improve the status of women. WOMANKIND Worldwide is firmly committed to ensuring that adequate and sufficient resources are made available by donors and governments to ensure that fundamental commitments made by the international community in international instruments such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment are met.

WOMANKIND's view of the aid environment

Over the past 20 years WOMANKIND has observed the changes taking place in the international aid environment through its work with its partner organisations in the global South and our own position as a Northern based NGO receiving funds from donors and government. In the last 5-6 years, we have been particularly concerned with understanding better the impact of the Paris Declaration and new aid modalities on organisations working for gender equality and women's empowerment in particular.

As a lead member of the UK Gender & Development Network[2], we carried out research[3] with organisations in the South to see whether the widely-held assumption that new aid modalities had real potential for gender mainstreaming and ensuring women's empowerment and rights held true. Our research included organisations from Asia, Latin America and Africa and ranged from very small grass roots organisations to much larger NGOs. Unsurprisingly therefore, the picture that emerged is a very diverse one. The way new aid modalities have been implemented varies greatly from continent to continent and country to country, with Africa being the continent where they are most advanced and organisations in Africa clearly articulating the impact this has had on them.

Overall it became clear that funding has increased for gender advocacy related work, and that this has gone hand in hand with a reduction in funding for service delivery work. It reveals that many women's organisations and those focused on challenging gender inequality feel that their work is under threat as the focus of funding moves in the direction of larger grants, tighter, short term targets, demonstrable and 'scaled up' results, and intensive administration.

Some of the key emerging issues that the report highlights are the lack of understanding many NGOs have about the wider aid context and the changing donor funding structures; the lack of attention donors are apparently paying to monitoring and understanding the impact their changes in approach are having on the NGO sector in each country; the fear or the reality of being marginalised by new

[1] See www.womankind.org.uk to find out more about our work

[2] See www.gadnetwork.org.uk to find out more about its work

[3] *Women's Rights and Gender Equality – The new Aid Environment and Civil Society Organisations.* For a copy of the report please go to the WOMANKIND website www.womankind.org.uk

funding mechanisms; and the clear lack of attention to gender equality and women's empowerment in many of the current aid mechanisms.

While donors talk about gender, and do enable some good gender work at the level of policy and lobbying work in some countries, the key aid modalities do not currently prioritise or really address the needs of those organisations and social movements working to address gender inequalities and promote women's rights. Indeed, the research highlights many worrying signs that aspects of the new aid modalities are further marginalising and excluding organisations committed to women's empowerment and the promotion of their human rights from reliable, long term funding.

WOMANKIND's recommendations

Overall WOMANKIND Worldwide believes it is vital that the international community renews its commitment to key agreements and international documents such as CEDAW, the BPFA and the MDGs and uses a joint approach to implementing them rather than looking at development goals and targets in isolation from international women's rights commitments. We have also identified 2 key areas for future action and research. The first one is the need to monitor the new aid environment, its tools and the impact they are having on actors involved and affected and ultimately on achieving gender equality and women's rights. The second one is in relation to the actual nature of the aid environment and calls for a diversification of the current approach to aid, both in terms of the activities/areas that are being funded as well as the types of organisations that are being funded.

Overall

1. Governments and donors should meaningfully include local, national and international civil society organisations (CSOs) in the disbursal of aid and debates in relation to this.

2. Governments and donors should honour international commitments to key agreements on women's rights and development such as the BPFA, CEDAW and the MDGs.

3. Governments and donors should commit adequate financial resources to implementing the above mentioned agreements. Governments also need to commit financial resources to gender commitments in documents such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

Monitor

1. Donors, governments and CSOs need to track carefully what funds are used to support women's rights or to help women out of poverty.

2. Donors need to systematically monitor the impact of changed funding streams, conditions and mechanisms on organisations working for gender equality and women's rights.

3. In particular, governments and donors need to monitor the funding available to CSOs by governments and the impact such funding has on the organisations and the work.

4. Donors and governments need to monitor the *implementation* of PRSPs and Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs) in relation to their impact on gender equality and women's rights.

5. Performance Assessment Frameworks (PAFs) need to mainstream gender and should be monitored to measure progress.

6. The effect of the Paris Declaration and Direct Budgetary Support (DBS) on social development issues and rights, including the impact of these mechanisms on civil society, needs to be evaluated. It is an area where growing concern is evident but as yet data on what is actually happening is almost non-existent.

Diversify Aid

1. Donors and governments need to ensure that special funds are available for gender equality work in each country to ensure it is addressed and that smaller, activist women's organisations are enabled to continue their work.

2. Donors and governments should make available long-term funding for women's rights organisations.

3. Pooled funds need to integrate gender with clear adherence and monitoring criteria.

4. Funding needs to be diversified to ensure that the current focus on NGOs as instruments of advocacy does not exclude other work that is critical for women's rights and gender equality such as legal services, capacity building for women to participate in development, confidence building, and direct service delivery that addresses the barriers for access for women.

5. Donors need to establish funding mechanisms that are accessible to a wide range of CSOs, not only the strongest and largest and those involved in policy debates.

6. National Women's Machineries (NWMs) need to be adequately resourced to enable them to undertake their vital role of leading on national gender equality plans.